

Wood River Parks and Rec Expansion Underway

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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WOOD RIVER - Construction is underway for a new inclusive playground and recreation center in Wood River Central Park.

The Wood River Parks and Recreation Department is heading this project. The playground will include a challenge course, which is unique to the area. The recreation center will offer basketball and pickleball courts and a gymnastic space.

“We’ve been working on these things for a while, so to finally have them come to fruition is awesome. It has been a lot of work to get to this point, and I’m excited to see it all,” Jason Woody, Wood River’s Parks and Recreation director, said. “I think our citizens will be pretty excited when they start driving by.”

The playground’s previous equipment has been replaced with a new swing set, a large play structure with multiple slides and a challenge course. This challenge course will allow people to time themselves and compete for the quickest time.

“Nobody really has something like that now, so we were excited to add something in here that nobody else has,” Woody said.

The playground’s poured-in-place rubber surfacing will make it easier for wheelchairs to access the space.

The recreation center will have two full basketball courts with lines for volleyball and pickleball, as well as a gymnastic space for the Parks and Rec department’s growing gymnastic program. There will also be an indoor walking track, weight room and three multipurpose rooms, which can be rented out for other programs and events.

Wood River Mayor Tom Stalcup noted that he once disagreed with the Parks and Rec expansion plan when he was first running for mayor, but he’s now “totally behind it.”

“It’s good for the city. Good for the community,” Stalcup said. “We’ve got a lot of good things going on within the Park District of Wood River, and we’re keeping everybody hopping. So we’re very excited about it.”

Playground construction by Custom Playgrounds started on Monday, June 5. Woody hopes that the playground will be ready by July 9, which is the date of the Parks and Recreation Department’s ice cream social.

“That would be my goal if everything can align properly, but I can’t guarantee that would happen. So sometime in the next month or month and a half, I would say,” Woody said.

Stalcup echoed this prediction and noted that the timing will depend on how long the poured-in-place rubber surfacing takes.

The recreation center is set to open sometime between October and November of this year.

The Parks and Rec department offices will also be moving to the recreation center. The department is currently housed in its own office at 633 North Wood River Avenue in a building commonly known as the Roundhouse. The Roundhouse building is often rented out for parties and events, and this space will still be available for rent in the future.

The City is currently in conversation with a local hospital about hosting an office for rehab purposes at the new recreation center.

Despite the large scope of the project, Stalcup said they're set to finish the expansion within their budget.

“Our Parks Director Jason Woody has done a really good job about planning and coming up with some good ideas as far as the layout and working really close with all of the engineering firms,” Stalcup said. “We’ve had a great response from all those companies. They’ve been great to work with. And I think we’re going to be under budget.”

The project is on track to cost approximately \$10–11 million, most of which has been covered by grants.

“We’re excited that we can offer such a cool amenity for the City of Wood River residents, basically for free,” Woody said.

The Parks and Recreation Department has further plans to expand in the future. You can keep up with their programs by visiting [their website](#).

But in the meantime, the city administration is looking forward to the project’s conclusion. Stalcup said he’s most excited about the indoor walking track at the recreation center, where “the old people in town, including myself” can walk.